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20 June 1985THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL'S INTELLIGENCE PRODUCTION

The National Intelligence Council (NIC) is that entity of the DCI which produces Intelligence Community judgments of major world trends and prospects. These judgments take form in various types and formats of national intelligence estimates. These estimates are based on all foreign intelligence available to the USG and are coordinated with the entire Intelligence Community. They reflect the coordinated views of the chiefs of the US Intelligence Community components, and as such they often reflect important differences of opinion. They cover the broadest intelligence questions produced -- as, for example, probable developments in the USSR's strategic power over the next 10 years. They are produced for the USG's most senior policymaking consumers, including the President. They paint the world as intelligence evidence indicates, without regard for policies or budgets.

Successive US Administrations have valued national intelligence estimates since they were first introduced in 1950. A number of elements in the national intelligence system have remained fairly constant over the years since that time, including dispassionate judgment, and final deliberation and sign-off on these studies by the DCI in concert with the chiefs of the respective US foreign intelligence agencies.

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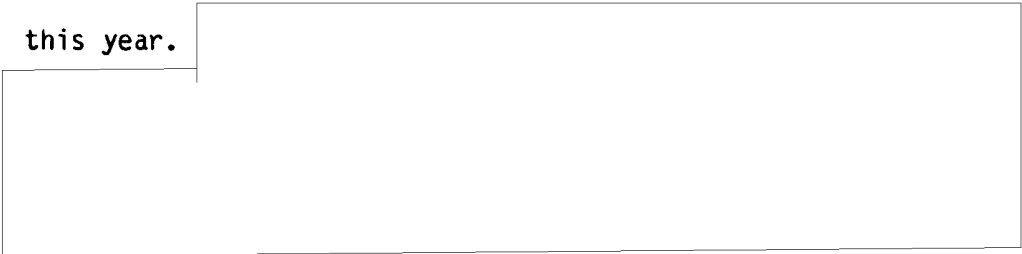
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Of particular interest for present purposes, however, are the improvements that have taken place in this system over the past few years. Briefly, these are:

- Better quality -- as collection, data bases, analytic methods, formatting, and presentation have improved.
- An increasing annual number of such estimates -- as they have grown more digestible by senior readers; and as new procedures have eased the process of producing fast-track estimates. In 1982 total of 67 national estimates was produced. Last year the figure was 80. This year it will run a little over 100.
- Greater help to policymaking consumers -- as estimates have done more to indicate not only threats but opportunities facing the US, possible alternative scenarios, differences of view among Intelligence Community participants, intelligence gaps needing collection, and indicators of change which bear watching.
- An expanding array of subject matter -- as strategic concerns have broadened to include energy supply, resource allocation, narcotics trafficking, terrorism, nuclear and chemical weapons proliferation, the high tech future, technology transfer, and Third World instabilities.

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- More relevance to ongoing policy processes -- as in particular the NIC's National Intelligence Officers (NIOs) keep in close touch with policymakers and reflect back into the process the problems needing inquiry; and as policymakers increasingly ask for specific help on fast-breaking issues. More than half of the total estimates produced last year were such special estimates, requested by senior policy makers and the DCI. Twenty-six such special estimates have been produced thus far this year.
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- More relevance for US security planning -- as periodic reviews are done on such subjects as Soviet capabilities for strategic nuclear conflict, space programs, naval strategy, armor programs, and inventories of Warsaw Pact forces opposite NATO. Also of special use to security policymakers are estimates on topics such as the possible Soviet response to SDI, the Soviet nuclear weapons stockpile, the Cuban presence in Nicaragua, the international flow of narcotics money, the Western European terrorist threat to US interests and NATO, and the implications of the Greek elections.

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-- Greater impact on readers -- as respect for estimates and the individual estimators has grown in recent years, and as key findings are now presented to senior readers in an easily identified special format.

I wish to stress that the definition of the NIC's "production" is not limited to these national estimates, but includes national intelligence communicated daily by NIC's National Intelligence Officers: some written, some face-to-face. There are 16 NIOs, each of whom is the DCI's and the Intelligence Community's senior substantive officer for the particular portfolio: e.g., strategic programs, general purpose forces, economics, terrorism, Soviet deception, warning, narcotics, science and technology, and six broad geographic areas. Of command rank, the NIOs and their assistants are drawn from senior CIA analysts, CIA chiefs of station, serving military general officers, Ambassadors and FSOs, NSA and DIA civilians, and specialists from academia, the institute world, and the private sector. In addition to preparing and chairing the national estimates, the NIOs "produce" national intelligence and pass it to the DCI and to senior policymakers in numerous manners and forums: special memos, think pieces, briefing memos, participation in policy forums, and the like. In these endeavors they exercise care to check with experts in the DDI, the DDO, DIA, INR, and elsewhere in the Community, to insure that such "estimates" indeed represent Community views -- or clearly indicate where differences of view exist, and why.

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Despite ongoing progress, the current estimates process continues to face numerous problems. These include gaps in collection that affect accuracy, difficulties involved in sometimes having to estimate the unknowable, coordination process hazards, and the lack of impact of uncongenial messages to consumers. Nonetheless, the NIO system produces national intelligence which is better in quality than in previous years, greater in quantity, more relevant to policy concerns, and still professionally dispassionate.

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